

In the days and weeks following September 11, 2001, many of my colleagues expressed their sympathy for the loss of so many Long Islanders. They asked me to tell my constituents that they were with them, and that if anything could be done to help, all I had to do was let them know.

On Wednesday, we accepted that offer when the House passed H.R. 847, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. This bill will ensure medical treatment for the first responders and recovery workers who were exposed to toxins at Ground Zero. It will also reopen the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund to provide financial support for recovery workers and first responders affected by the cleanup. More than 71,000 people were exposed to poisonous toxins in lower Manhattan and over 13,000 remain sick today.

New Yorkers have always been there to help our fellow Americans: when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, we contributed to the effort to rebuild New Orleans; when wildfires burned in California, we gave to those who lost their homes; and when tornadoes swept through Kansas and Oklahoma, New Yorkers pitched in too. With the passage of the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, my colleagues will be able to say, "When the terrorists came to New York, we were there for New Yorkers."